

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

*Sub a)* A method and apparatus for implementing group calling is disclosed. In one embodiment, the method includes displaying a service provider, a service provider rate for communicating with the service provider, and a real-time indication of whether the service provider is available. The method further includes receiving a request from a first customer to communicate with the service provider and connecting the first customer to the service provider through a link capable of transmitting from the service provider to the first customer. The method also further includes receiving a request from a second customer to communicate with the service provider and connecting the second customer to the service provider through a link capable of transmitting from the service provider to the second customer while the first customer is coupled to the service provider. The method also includes billing the first customer automatically based on the time during which the link to the first customer is maintained; and billing the second customer automatically based on the time during which the link to the second customer is maintained. The method may further include connecting the service provider to a plurality of customers.

In an alternative embodiment, a system may include logic blocks suitable for performing the method described above or for otherwise implementing a system for connecting a plurality of customers to a service provider. Furthermore, such a system may be suitable for interaction with a moderator and/or an intermediary. Moreover, such a system may include a communications interface and a controller computer.

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